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ACTION, ARA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3167
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY
USIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0762
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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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USIA FOR AR-CALLAHAN, AGNEW

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PREL, CR.
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA -- NOVEMBER POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1. SUMMARY. CALDERON: IMAGE, COATTAILS AND GOLDEN
HANDSHAKES -- I'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST: THE FISHMAN

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PAGE 02 SAN JO 09744 01 OF 05 302207Z
CHRONICLES -- FISHMAN'S VICE MINISTER OF PUBLIC
SECURITY OUT -- PAY RAISES AND POLITICKING: THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY -- SALA IV DECLARES NATIONAL
EMERGENCY LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL -- STILL SEEKING
UNITY: THE PLN -- GOCR REJECTS BERNAL ASYLUM
REQUEST -- GOCR STUDYING REQUEST OF PERUVIAN ASYLEE
-- LA PENCA SMOLDERS -- RIOT SQUAD CLEARS THE
CARTAGO HIGHWAY -- LEGISLATURE TAKES AIM AT
PROFESSIONAL GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

CALDERON: IMAGE, COATTAILS AND GOLDEN HANDSHAKES

2. THE PRESIDENT'S CLIMBING APPROVAL RATINGS --
HELPED IN NO SMALL MEASURE BY AN ADEPT MEDIA CAMPAIGN
-- HAVE THE OPPOSITION INCREASINGLY ON EDGE. POPULAR
NEWSWEEKLY "RUMBO" HIGHLIGHTED THE ADMINISTRATION'S
GROWING STRENGTH, CALLING CALDERON A "TEFLON
PRESIDENT" WHO HAS SUCCESSFULLY CULTIVATED AN IMAGE

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OF SENSITIVITY, DECENCY, GENEROSITY AND CONCERN. SKILLFUL AT DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM SCANDAL AND CONFRONTATION, HE IS SEEN AS A CARING "MAN OF THE PEOPLE" RATHER THAN AS AN ALOOF INTELLECTUAL OR PARTISAN FIGHTER.

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3. TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH, AS THE LOCAL GALLUP AFFILIATE BEGAN ITS LATEST ROUND OF POLLING (RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN EARLY DECEMBER), THE PLN STEPPED UP ITS CRITICISM OF WHAT IT CLAIMS IS THE GOVERNMENT'S SELF-SERVING USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS.

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LIBERACION DEPUTIES EVELIO CASTRO AND OSCAR SOLEY, AMONG OTHERS, SNIPED AT THE PRESIDENT FROM THE FLOOR OF THE ASSEMBLY, PROMPTING ACERBIC EXCHANGES AND DERAILING DEBATE ON KEY PROJECTS. CASTRO CRITICIZED THE REPORTEDLY HIGH AMOUNTS (ALLEGEDLY USD 22 MILLION IN THREE YEARS) SPENT ON PRESIDENTIAL PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION SERVICES. SOLEY, CHARGING THAT CALDERON WAS VIOLATING THE CONSTITUTION BY ACTIVELY SUPPORTING PUSC PRE-CANDIDATE MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ (AND THAT CALDERON AND RODRIGUEZ SHARED THE SAME PUBLICITY TEAM), THREATENED TO FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL (TSE).

4. THE PRESIDENT DENOUNCED OPPOSITION ACCUSATIONS AS "FALSE AND ABSURD." AN ADMINISTRATION HAD AN OBLIGATION TO KEEP THE PUBLIC INFORMED OF ITS PROGRESS, HE SAID. FURTHERMORE, HE WASN'T GOING TO PROHIBIT RODRIGUEZ FROM ACCOMPANYING HIM AT CEREMONIAL EVENTS. RODRIGUEZ WARNED THAT THE PLN WOULD GAIN NOTHING WITH ITS UNFOUNDED TIRADE, AND POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT HIM APPEARING WITH CALDERON BACK WHEN THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY WAS SAGGING.

5. LOATHE TO ABANDON THE OFFENSIVE, CASTRO DROPPED WHAT HE TERMED A "BOMBSHELL," DECLARING THAT AT LEAST TWO BUSINESSES WITH WHICH RODRIGUEZ WAS AFFILIATED WERE GUILTY OF TAX EVASION. RODRIGUEZ SCOFFED THAT CASTRO WAS TOSSING "FIVE CENT FIRECRACKERS;" THE TAXES HE REFERRED TO WERE A MATTER OF LEGAL DISPUTE BEING RESOLVED ACCORDING TO STANDARD PROCEDURE AT THE

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TREASURY MINISTRY. THE RODRIGUEZ CAMP TOOK OUT FULL PAGE ADDS ON TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS IN THE MAJOR DAILIES, DEPLORING THE OTHER SIDE'S PROCLIVITY TO SLING MUD AND CALLING FOR A CLEAN CAMPAIGN THAT WOULDN'T POLLUTE COSTA RICA'S PRISTINE MOUNTAIN AIR.

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6. CALDERON HAS REPORTEDLY ASKED SOME OF HIS
MINISTERS TO TIDY UP THEIR AFFAIRS, IF THEY PLAN TO

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AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY
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USIA FOR AR-CALLAHAN, AGNEW

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PREL, CR
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA -- NOVEMBER POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

RUN FOR DEPUTY. RESIGNATIONS COULD BEGIN AS EARLY AS
FEBRUARY 1. THE SAN JOSE PRESS HAS PUBLISHED LISTS

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OF THOSE KEY OFFICIALS WHO WILL LIKELY OPT FOR THE
HUSTINGS. A SELECT FEW WILL GET A GOLDEN HANDSHAKE

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FROM CALDERON IN THE FORM OF TOP PLACES ON MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ'S SAN JOSE SLATE (AND HENCE GUARANTEED ELECTION).. FIVE WHOSE NAMES ARE MENTIONED ARE SECURITY MINISTER FISHMAN, DESPITE HIS RECENT SETBACKS, GONZALO FAJARDO OF ECONOMY, HERNAN BRAVO OF NATURAL RESOURCES, RODOLFO BRENES, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER AND HERNAN FOURNIER, PRESIDENT OF THE ELECTRIC COMPANY (ICE) TWO OTHER PROMINENT NAMES: MABELLE NIETO OF THE MIXED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE INSTITUTE AND TREASURY MINISTER RODOLFO MENDEZ MATA ARE ALSO BEING MENTIONED AS POTENTIAL VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON RODRIGUEZ' TICKET.

I'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST: THE FISHMAN CHRONICLES

7. ON NOVEMBER 13, PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER FISHMAN WENT PUBLIC WITH THE RELEASE OF THE NAMES OF 14 COMPANIES, HE CHARGED WITH MONEY-LAUNDERING TIES TO COLOMBIA. HE ALSO SENT GOCR INVESTIGATORS RUMMAGING THROUGH THE BOOKS. FISHMAN SAID HE WAS ACTING ON A TIP PROVIDED BY FOREIGN EXCHANGE OFFICIALS IN COLOMBIA. OWNERS FOR SEVERAL OF THE COMPANIES VEHEMENTLY DENIED ANY GUILT. AT MID-MONTH COLOMBIA'S AMBASSADOR TO COSTA RICA, ZULETA DE PATINO, FILED A DIP NOTE FAULTING FISHMAN FOR NOT ABIDING BY THE RULES OF CONFIDENTIALITY GOVERNING EXCHANGES OF ANTI-NARCOTICS INFORMATION BETWEEN THE TWO

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COUNTRIES. FISHMAN ORDERED OFFICIALS TO BOGOTA TO GO REVIEW THE EVIDENCE. THEY HINTED TO THE PRESS THAT THE NUMBER OF COMPANIES UNDER INVESTIGATION IS MORE LIKE EIGHT OR NINE COMPANIES. (SAN JOSE'S DEA OFFICE HAS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO FOLLOW UP ON THE ALLEGATIONS AND HAS NOT FOUND ANYTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE FISHMAN'S ALLEGATIONS, ALTHOUGH INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUE. THE COLMBIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT SHE WAS GOING TO LEAK TO THE PRESS THE "FACT" THAT ALL THE COMPANIES NAMED WERE COMPETITORS TO FISHMAN FAMILY ENTERPRISES.) OVERALL, THE LATEST INCIDENT LEFT FISHMAN'S CRITICS AGAIN POINTING TO THE RASH MANNER IN WHICH HE GOES ABOUT HIS COUNTER-NARCOTICS WORK.

8. THE TRIP BY THE THREE OFFICIALS INVESTIGATING THE SEPTEMBER KIDNAPPING OF FISHMAN BY "EX-GUERRILLA" ORLANDO ORDONEZ YIELDED NO PUBLIC RESULTS. HONDURAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF LUNA SPOKE WITH THE TEAM BUT SHED NO NEW LIGHT ON THE CASE. BISHOP LUIS SANTOS DECLINED TO MEET WITH THE TEAM, SAYING HE HAD ALREADY TOLD ALL HE KNEW TO THE PRESS. THE COMMISSION'S REPORT IS DUE IN DECEMBER. THERE WERE NO NEW LEADS ON ORDONEZ' WHEREABOUTS.

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FISHMAN'S VICE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY GOES

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9. VICE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY RICARDO MADRIGAL
TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION ON NOVEMBER 6. MADRIGAL HAD
RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC SECURITY'S AIR AND MARITIME
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SECTIONS. THE FORMER LACSA PILOT TOLD THE PRESS HE
WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF RETIREMENT AT 60. [FISHMAN
DENIED THAT MADRIGAL'S DEPARTURE WAS ANYTHING OTHER
THAN A NORMAL RETIREMENT. (FISHMAN TOLD THE
AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY THAT HE HAD LET MADRIGAL GO
"AMICABLY.") MADRIGAL'S RESIGNATION WAS THE SECOND

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY
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USIA FOR AR-CALLAHAN, AGNEW

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PREL, CR

SUBJECT: COSTA RICA -- NOVEMBER POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

DEPARTURE OF A PUBLIC SECURITY VICE MINISTER IN A
LITTLE OVER A YEAR. ERIK KOBERG RESIGNED IN AUGUST

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1991 FOLLOWING A POLICE CLASH WITH CENTRAL SAN JOSE
STREET VENDORS. MADRIGAL WILL APPARENTLY BE NAMED AS
COSTA RICA'S AMBASSADOR TO GUATEMALA. ON NOVEMBER
27, FISHMAN NAMED ALVARO CARRION BRENES, A 56
YEAR-OLD BUSINESS EXECUTIVE TO REPLACE MADRIGAL.

PAY RAISES AND POLITICKING: THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

10. OCTOBER 'S DEBATE OVER A SALARY INCREASE FOR
DEPUTIES SPILLED OVER INTO NOVEMBER. AFTER THE
RESIGNATION OF RODRIGO OREAMUNO ON OCTOBER 20 TO
PROTEST THE ILLEGAL CLOAKROOM CHANGES TO A PAY
MEASURE, THE LEGISLATURE BACK-PEDALED. IT DEBATED
THE CONSTITUTIONALITY (ARTICLE 113) OF THIS "
SELF-ENRICHING" MEASURE AND SOUGHT A MECHANISM TO PEG
RAISES TO A BENCHMARK LIKE ELECTIONS, COST-OF-LIVING
INCREASES OR GENERAL SALARY RISES. ATTORNEY GENERAL
(MINISTRO PUBLICO) JOSE MARIA TIJERINO LAUNCHED AN
INVESTIGATION TO SEE IF ANY ILLEGALITY WAS COMMITTED
WHEN THE PAY BILL WAS ROUNDED UPWARD FROM 70,000 TO
100,000 COLONES. PLN DEPUTY REYNALDO MAXWELL
(MENTIONED AS A HEAD THAT MIGHT ROLL AS A RESULT OF
THE PAY RAISE SNAFU) SAID HE HAD CHANGED THE BILL
WITH HIS COLLEAGUES' APPROVAL. ASSEMBLY LEADER
ROBERTO TOVAR WORRIED ABOUT THE IMAGE OF THE DEPUTIES
AS THEY WERE CALLED FOR INTERVIEWS WITH THE ATTORNEY
GENERAL'S STAFF.

11. BY MONTH'S END THE LEGISLATURE CONTINUED TO HAVE
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TROUBLE GATHERING A QUORUM AND DIVIDED OVER ISSUES
SUCH AS CALDERON'S USE OF PUBLICITY (SEE PARA 3).
THE CONGRESS ALSO DEBATED WHETHER OR NOT TO SEND A
DELEGATION ON A TRIP TO TAIWAN. CONCERN MOUNTED THAT
THE FREQUENTLY LETHARGIC ASSEMBLY MIGHT NOT MEET THE
DECEMBER 22 DEADLINES FOR APPROVING THE SALE OF THE
STATE COMPANIES, CEMPASA AND FERTICA, AND FOR THE

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PASSAGE OF LAW THAT PERMITS PRIVATE COMPANIES TO BUILD AND OPERATE PUBLIC WORKS. FAILURE TO PASS BOTH LAWS WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE SAL III.

SALA IV DECLARES NATIONAL EMERGENCY LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL

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12. IN MID-NOVEMBER, THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHAMBER (SALA IV) DECLARED THE GOCR'S NATIONAL EMERGENCY LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL. THE DECISION THREATENED TO SLOW A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WHICH WERE LET FOR CONTRACT UNDER THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY LAW. THE ADVANTAGE OF THE EMERGENCY LAW WAS THAT IT REMOVED SOME PROJECTS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND OFFERED A SHORT-CUT FOR PRIORITY PROJECTS. OTHER SALA IV DECISIONS IN NOVEMBER PERMIT THE WRITING OF CONTRACTS IN DOLLARS, A MOVE THAT OPENS THE WAY FOR GREATER FREEDOM OF COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS. THE SALA IV ALSO OPENED THE WAY FOR MORE FREEDOM IN PRIVATE EDUCATION LIMITING THE SUPERVISORY AUTHORITY OF THE NATION'S EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL AND TO SET FEES AND OTHER RULES. THE COURT SELECTED A NEW PRESIDENT IN LATE NOVEMBER, CHOOSING LUIS PAULINO

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MORA, 48 YEAR-OLD, MADRID-TRAINED JUDGE, AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER. MORA PROMISED TO MAKE TACKLING SALA IV'S BACKLOG OF CASES HIS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY, ALTHOUGH IN A RECENT NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW HE ALSO RE-ASSERTED THE COURT'S RIGHT TO PLAY A ROLE IN ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND

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USIA FOR AR-CALLAHAN, AGNEW

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ELECTIONS.

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STILL SEEKING UNITY: THE PLN

13. AMID PRESS REPORTS OF CONTINUED INTERNAL DIVISIONS, THE PLN SOUGHT TO ACTIVATE THE MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVED INTERNAL COHESION. IN THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER, FORMER PRESIDENT LUIS MONGE CONVENED A MEETING WITH 40 OLD AND NEW PLN LEADERS TO WARN AGAIN OF THE DANGERS OF DIVISION. IN THE EVENT HERALDED AS MONGE'S RETURN TO POLITICS, THE FORMER PRESIDENT WAXED PESSIMISTIC, PREDICTING THAT A PUSC WIN IN 1994 WILL SPELL THE END OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE CREATED BY THE PLN DURING ITS 41 YEARS. THE EVENT DREW ON A PART OF THE PLN LEADERSHIP, BUT AMONG THE MISSING WERE CANDIDATES MARGARITA PENON, HER HUSBAND OSCAR ARIAS AND JOSE MIGUEL CORRALES. THE PLN ALSO MADE ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BRING MAVERICK ROLANDO ARAYA BACK INTO THE FOLD, INVITING HIM TO PARTY HEADQUARTERS FOR TALKS IN EARLY NOVEMBER, APPARENTLY IN AN EFFORT TO ELICIT A PLEDGE OF SUPPORT FOR THE PLN CANDIDATE. AFTER THE TALKS, ARAYA WAS SILENT ABOUT HIS INTENTIONS, SAYING ONLY THAT HE PLANED TO WORK WITH A CITIZEN ACTION GROUP.

COSTA RICA REJECTS BERNAL ASYLUM REQUEST

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14. THE GOCR DENIED THE REQUEST OF FORMER PANAMANIAN
POLICE OFFICIAL JORGE ELICER BERNAL FOR POLITICAL

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ASYLUM. BERNAL, WHO SERVED UNDER MANUEL NORIEGA AS
THE HEAD OF THE RIOT OR "DOBERMAN" SQUAD, IS WANTED
IN PANAMA FOR MURDER. THE GOCR ISSUED AN ORDER FOR
BERNAL'S ARREST AND THE POLICE STATED THEY BELIEVE
THE FUGITIVE IS STILL IN COSTA RICA.

GOCR STUDYING REQUEST OF PERUVIAN ASYLEE

15. JULIO VERA GUTIERREZ, A PERUVIAN BUSINESSMAN,
ACCUSED OF COUP-PLOTTING AGAINST PRESIDENT FUJIMORI
WHO SOUGHT ASYLUM IN THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY IN LIMA
ARRIVED IN SAN JOSE ON NOVEMBER 26. HE WAS
INTERVIEWED BY OFFICIALS OF THE MFA AND THE
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (DIS). THE GOCR SAID IT IS
STUDYING THE GUTIERREZ CASE AND HAS ONLY GRANTED
GUTIERREZ, WHO IS REPORTEDLY IN BAD HEALTH,
PROVISIONAL PERMISSION TO STAY IN COSTA RICA.
FOLLOWING THE CONTROVERSY TOUCHED OFF BY THE GRANTING
OF ASYLUM TO VENEZUELAN BLANCA IBANEZ, PRESIDENT
CALDERON AND THE GOCR MAY MOVE CAUTIOUSLY IN THIS CASE.

LA PENCA SMOLDERS

16. IN EARLY NOVEMBER FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF THE 1984
LA PENCA BOMBING VICTIMS FILED A BRIEF WITH THE
FOURTH CRIMINAL DISTRICT IN COSTA RICA CHARGING U.S.
AND GOCR OFFICIALS WITH HOSTILE ACTS AGAINST COSTA
RICA AND INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THE

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LIST OF OFFICIALS NAMED IN THE BRIEF INCLUDED
PRESIDENTS REAGAN AND BUSH, OLIVER NORTH, FORMER
AMBASSADOR TO COSTA RICA CURTIN WINSOR AND TOP COSTA
RICAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT MONGE AND THEN
VICE PRESIDENT ARMANDO ARAUZ. MONGE RESPONDED IN THE
PRESS BY CALLING THE BRIEF A GROUNDLESS ACTION AND

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USIA FOR AR-CALLAHAN, AGNEW

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
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THE PROSECUTOR LATER FOUND NO GROUNDS FOR UPHOLDING
THE CHARGES. THE ADMINISTRATIVE BRANCH OF THE

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PAGE 02

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SUPREME COURT ALSO THREATENED DERELICTION OF
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MFA LEGAL AFFAIRS OFFICERS FOR
FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR
MFA'S INACTION IN THE JOHN HULL EXTRADITION REQUEST.

RIOT SQUAD CLEARS THE CARTAGO HIGHWAY

17. ON NOVEMBER 17/18 PROTESTERS FROM THE COMMUNITY
OF SAN DIEGO DE TRES RIOS BLOCKED THE HIGHWAY TO

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CARTAGO TO PROTEST THE LOSS OF BUS SERVICE FOR THEIR COMMUNITY FOLLOWING A LEGAL DISPUTE OVER THE BUS CONCESSION AND A SALA IV RESTRAINING ORDER THAT PROHIBITED MICROBUSES FROM COVERING THE ROUTE. THE BLOCKADE BROUGHT OUT THE RIOT SQUAD, WHO BLOODIED HEADS AND DISLODGED PROTESTERS WITH A BARRAGE OF TEAR GAS. THERE WERE A FEW INJURIES. ON NOVEMBER 19, PRESIDENT CALDERON WARNED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL RESPOND ONLY TO DIALOGUE AND WILL USE FORCE TO DISLODGE PROTESTERS FROM ROADS AND OTHER PUBLIC AREAS.

LEGISLATURE TAKES AIM AT PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

18. THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY'S ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION REVIVED A YEAR-OLD PROJECT TO END THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ABILITY TO RECEIVE PUBLIC FUNDS. IT AIMS TO CHALLENGE SAFE REVENUES FROM SOURCES SUCH AS THE SALE OF STAMPS ON LEGAL DOCUMENTS, WHICH ARE BY LAW TURNED OVER TO THE

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LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION. THIS EFFORT TO REMOVE THE PRIVILEGES OF THE PROFESSIONAL GUILDS WAS CHALLENGED BY SOME, WHILE APPLAUDED BY THE PRESS AS AN EFFORT TO KILL OFF AN OUTDATED SACRED COW.

GUINOT

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